

Our Man In Havana

This witty send-up of an agent's life was written by Graham Greene. The main character is Mr. Wormold, a vacuum cleaner salesman in Havana, who is always short of money. His beautiful daughter Milly attends a catholic school because Wormold had to promise to his wife, that he would bring his daughter up in a religious way when they were divorced. Although he is a very calm person he doesn't like to see Milly growing up and meeting men – especially not Captain Segura, a policeman who is said to torture people very cruelly. Dr. Hasselbacher, who is a few years older than Wormold, is the salesman's best friend. They often go to bars, where they drink little bottles of whisky which Wormold collects; he already has put up a huge collection he is very proud of.

I liked Mr. Wormold most because he sees the world in a witty and critical way. When you start reading this book, it is hard to stop because it is quite catching. The story takes place in Cuba in about 1958; as the title suggests mainly in Havana, where Wormold owns a shop. This is quite important because many organisations in the USA etc. were interested in things happening in that country.

The Plot:

Wormold's daughter has reached an expensive age – she wants to join the country-club and own a horse. So he accepts the offer of a mysterious man whose name is Hawthorne: \$300-plus a month... and becomes Agent 59200/5, M.I.6's man in Havana.

To keep the job, Wormold pretends to recruit sub-agents and sends fake stories. His employers trust in them and provide more money, modern equipment, a secretary – Beatrice – and a professional decoder. When they arrive in Cuba Wormold's stories start coming disturbingly true, his imaginary sub-agents become alive and some people show that they would like to see him dead....

In my opinion the most amusing incident is when Wormold is invited to a meeting and is warned a few hours before, that someone is going to poison him in the dining room. In spite of that he decides to go there.

Wormold tries not to eat anything that is served and changes the plates. As luck would have it he spills his whisky and the cook's dog licks it. It dies a few seconds later and Wormold prefers to leave because of the cook's anger.

Letter to a publisher:

Dear Mr. Herbert

Last week I finished my latest novel – *Our Man In Havana* – and I think this book is bound to become a mega-seller.

It describes the story of Mr. Wormold, a vacuum cleaner salesman, who lives in Havana. His daughter has reached an expensive age – so he accepts Hawthorne's offer of \$300-plus a month.... and becomes Agent 59200/5, M.I.6's man in Havana. To keep the job, Wormold pretends to recruit sub-agents and sends fake stories. Then the stories start coming disturbingly true....

I've already shown this book to several people and they all were fascinated.

For example William Heinemann from the Financial Times wrote:

He has a sharp nose for trouble and injustice. In *Our Man In Havana* – a witty send-up of an agent's life – it is Cuba before Castro

The cover would be illustrated by Paul Hogarth. I've sent you a copy of the script; it would be nice if you read through it – you won't be disappointed.

Graham Greene

A Different final chapter:

Epilogue in London:

They had looked at him curiously when he gave his name, and then they had put him into a lift and taken him, a little to his surprise down and not up. As they told him, he left the lift when a green light appeared. Hawthorne came down the corridor and went by without saying a word. He moved into the lift and the doors closed.

Wormold went down the corridor when he heard a loud cry of a woman.... Beatrice! He ran to the door the noise was coming from and opened it forcefully. There were already some nice people waiting for him and he looked straight into the barrel of a gun.

"Hullo Wormold; nice to see you...", a man with a bald said while turning around in his luxurious leather chair. He wore a black monocle and looked rather powerful.

Immediately a gorilla came into Wormold's mind.

"What have you done to Beatrice?", he asked.

"Don't think about her, I would never do anything to such a beautiful lady" he assured and pointed at a cassette-recorder standing in front of him.

"She is working in Jakarta now."

"What's that?"

"The end of the world. Farther than Basra. I'm convinced that this punishment isn't too hard besides she hasn't broken our internal laws. But other people have..."

He played with a paper knife while staring at him.

"But we don't need to have such an uncomfortable conversation; sit down Wormold!"

"I prefer to stand. You have no right to send her to Jakarta; she has nothing to do with anything."

"You aren't supposed to be demanding. Remember your situation..."

The palms of Wormold's hands began to sweat. He regretted having invented the story of the enormous weapons hidden in the jungle. But who thought that a secret service would believe in plans of vacuum cleaners....

"Okay, there's no way out for me; am I going to be shot?"

"Right, if you want to.", the gorilla said and raised a gun. Wormold heard the shot and fell on the floor.

A few minutes later, when he recovered consciousness, he was surrounded by many people singing "Happy Birthday". In front of him stood Milly with a huge birthday cake and said:

"Congratulations to your 40th birthday; this was a nice trick we played on you, wasn't it? And there are other news: Captain Segura and me are going to marry next week!" These words were the last things he recognised before everything went black....

Half a year later an advertisement appeared in the Havana Times:

Detective Agency Havana
Owners: Beatrice Wormold & husband
We are able to solve all your problems